

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 5521

E.O.: 11652: GDS
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SUBJ: COALITION TALKS CONTINUE

REFS: (A) COPENHAGEN 5326, (B) COPENHAGEN 5325, (C) COPEN-
HAGEN 5277

SUMMARY. TALKS AIMED AT AGREEING ON AN EXPANDED GOVERNMENT
COMPOSED OF MEMBERS OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LIBERAL
PARTIES ARE NEARING THE END OF THEIR THIRD WEEK. MAJOR PRO-
BLEMS MUST STILL BE TACKLED BY THE NEGOTIATORS, BUT OUTCOME
SHOULD BE CLEAR BY NEXT WEEK. WHATEVER HAPPENS, PRIME MINIS-
TER JORGENSEN'S OBJECTIVE OF PREVENTING BOURGEOIS UNITY WILL
HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED - AT LEAST FOR NOW. END SUMMARY.

1. NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS (SD) AND THE
LIBERALS
(VENSTRE) ON FORMATION OF A GOVERNMENT COALITION ARE
NEARING THE END OF THEIR THIRD WEEK. MONDAY, AUGUST 21, AFTER
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OBTAINING RENEWED ENDORSEMENT OF THE TALKS FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE
PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS, PRIME MINISTER JORGENSEN AND LIBERAL
LEADER HENNING CHRISTOPHERSEN STEPPED UP THE PACE OF THEIR
DISCUSSIONS. WHILE STILL CAUTIOUS IN THEIR ASSESSMENTS, MOST
OBSERVERS SEEM NOW TO REGARD AN SD/V COALITION AS LIKELY.
SOME JOURNALISTS EVEN PREDICT ANNOUNCEMENT OF A COALITION
PLATFORM AND LIST OF MINISTERS BY THE WEEKEND OR EARLY NEXT

WEEK.

2. THE TWO-PARTY NEGOTIATIONS ARE TAKING PLACE AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICIAL RESIDENCE BEHIND WHAT WERE, UNTIL EARLY THIS WEEK, LEAKPROOF DOORS. SINCE MONDAY, HOWEVER, THE PRESS HAS REPORTED ON MORE SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE TALKS INCLUDING RUMORED AGREEMENT ON SUCH ISSUES AS THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE GREAT BELT BRIDGE AND NUCLEAR POWER PLANT CONSTRUCTION. ALTHOUGH AGREEMENT ON SUCH RELATIVELY MINOR ISSUES MAY HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED, THE BIG ECONOMIC ISSUES SUCH AS INCOMES POLICY, TAX REFORM AND HOUSING POLICY ARE STILL UNDER DISCUSSION. AND THESE ARE THE CRUCIAL ISSUES WHICH, GIVEN THE DIFFERENCES IN THE PARTIES' TRADITIONAL POSITIONS, COULD LEAD TO THE BREAKDOWN OF THE TALKS AND AN EARLY ELECTION.

3. THE OTHER PARTIES REGARD THE BARE FACT THAT THE TALKS HAVE CONTINUED SO LONG AS INDICATING THEIR SERIOUSNESS AND VARIOUS PARTY SPOKESMEN HAVE STATED THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTY POSITIONS. CONSERVATIVE LEADER POUL SCHLUTER TOLD US HE THINKS A COALITION IS LIKELY AND THAT SUCH A GOVERNMENT WOULD POSE PROBLEMS FOR THE CONSERVATIVES BY CASTING THEM IN AN UNCOMFORTABLE "LOYAL OPPOSITION" ROLE VIS-A-VIS THE LIBERALS. (HE HAS PUBLICLY CAUTIONED THE LIBERALS AGAINST ATTEMPTING TO SPEAK FOR THE ENTIRE NON-SOCIALIST CENTER.) NIELS HELWEG PETERSEN, RADICAL PARTY SPOKESMAN, HAS STATED THAT THE TWO PARTIES SHOULD NOT EXPECT AUTOMATIC POLICY SUPPORT FROM HIS PARTY.
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4. THE PARTIES OF THE EXTREME LEFT HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY REGARD THE SD/V TALKS WITH GREAT SUSPICION. THEY SAY THAT THE FORMATION OF AN SD/V COALITION WOULD MEAN THE SACRIFICE OF SOCIALIST OBJECTIVES. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LEFT SOCIALISTS, THE SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S PARTY, AND - INTERESTINGLY - THE JUSTICE PARTY ATTENDED AN AUGUST 23 MEETING CALLED BY THE DANISH COMMUNIST PARTY (DKP) TO DISCUSS "THE SITUATION" CREATED BY THE SD/V TALKS. A JUSTICE PARTY SOURCE IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE MEETING WAS NOT TO ESTABLISH GENERAL CO-OPERATION AMONG THE FOUR PARTIES. RATHER, IT WAS TO AGREE ON SUPPORT FOR CERTAIN PARTS OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PROGRAM, IN PARTICULAR THE JENS KAMPMAN (MINISTER OF TAXES AND EXCISES) TAX REFORM PROPOSALS. IB CHRISTENSEN, JUSTICE PARTY CHAIRMAN, SAID HE ACCEPTED THE DKP INVITATION TO THE MEETING TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS THAT THEY WOULD FIND SUPPORT ON THE LEFT SHOULD THE SD/V TALKS FAIL - A SPECTRE THAT ANKER JORGENSEN SEEMS TO BE STRIVING TO AVOID.

5. COMMENT: WHETHER OR NOT JORGENSEN IS SUCCESSFUL IN HIS EFFORT TO BROADEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE UNPOPULAR ECONOMIC MEASURES THE GOVERNMENT MUST TAKE OUGHT TO BE CLEAR WITHIN A

WEEK OR SOONER. GIVEN THE MOMENTUM THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE ACHIEVED AND THE HOPE THEY HAVE AWAKENED AMONG A GREAT PART OF THE POPULATION, COLLAPSE OF THE TALKS INVOLVES RISKS FOR BOTH PARTICIPANTS. SHOULD THEY COLLAPSE, THE PRIME MINISTER WILL IN ANY CASE HAVE ACHIEVED HIS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED PURPOSE OF PREVENTING COOPERATION AMONG THE BOURGEOIS PARTIES (REF-TEL C) - AT LEAST FOR NOW.

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